JEFF BOLLIER/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

Mayor Jim Schmitt looks on as demolition of the former Carlton Inn begins Monday morning. The popular restaurant spot will be demolished and the site turned into the Sunset Inn Bed and Breakfast in 2017.

Carlton Inn demolition begins in Green Bay

Sunset Inn Bed and Breakfast will occupy the site in 2017

JEFF BOLLIER | USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

A backhoe took a ceremonial chunk out of the Carlton Inn roof Monday morning, the first step in a new chapter for a popular Green Bay site.

Owners Corey and Kim Capwell plan to demolish the Carlton and build the Sunset Inn Bed and Breakfast, 2607 Nicolet Drive, in its place. The bed and breakfast will feature 10 guest suites, a full-service kitchen, a great room for guest events and access to the Bay of Green Bay.

The Capwells plan to live on the site with their three children, Kayla, Krysten and Kenna. And while the bed and breakfast will bring an end to the site's history as a restaurant, Corey Capwell said the family plans to repurpose and preserve some of the oft-remembered features of the Carlton Inn.

"The Carlton Inn sign … will be the new kickplate for the new bar we're creating," he said. "Also, I'm taking the exterior windows that face the bay and repurpose them for the game room. … There's also the mirrors in there in the big dining hall. I'm going to repurpose those also."

Carl and Karen Berndt owned the site since 1965 before selling it to the Capwells last year. Over the years, it has been home

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"Everything about this city and the change that's coming is wonderful."

COREY CAPWELL
OWNERS OF SITE

Carlton

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to popular restaurants such as the Harbor Fish Market & Grille, Willie Wood's Shorewood Inn, The Phoenix Club and Patrick's on the Bay. But the site sat empty for three years and has started to show its age. Corey Capwell said a lack of proper winterization in recent years will require them to start over from utilities up.

The Capwells' plans for the site call for construction of a bed and breakfast that meets AAA's criteria for a four-diamond establishment. AAA's website describes it as upscale, stylish, an extensive array of amenities and a high degree of service.

Corey Capwell said the Sunset Inn will bring a new, modern bed and breakfast to the city that fits in with Green Bay's overall revival.

"Everything about this city and the change that's coming is wonderful," Corey Capwell said. "I think this will be a great place and a great addition to this community and this area."

Green Bay Mayor Jim Schmitt applauded the project as an effort to make Green Bay a better place. He said Sunset Inn will enhance the Nicolet Neighborhood and be an asset to the nearby University of Wisconsin-Green Bay.

"These kinds of projects don't come easy. They take a lot of work," Schmitt said. "But this will make a unique contribution to Green Bay."

Panacea Group CEO Keith Plaster, the project's general contractor, said demolition of the site will begin in earnest in April, followed by site work that will raise the lot to aid drainage and access from Nicolet Drive.

He said actual construction won't begin until the fall with a targeted opening date of April 1, 2017.

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Wood shows off Shorewood Inn

Ex-Packers expected for grand opening

By Jim Kneiszel
Press-Gazette

Green Bay Packers fans looking for a mess of pork ribs served up with a few pigskin memories on the side might want to check out Willie Wood's Shorewood Inn this weekend.

The Packers Hall of Fame defensive back is gathering an impressive list of Glory Years teammates Saturday for the grand opening of the former Carlton Inn, 2607 Nicolet Drive.

Among the 12-15 Packers expected for the invitation-only noon ribbon-cutting — and for dinners throughout the weekend — are Jerry Kramer, Herb Adderley, Boyd Dowler and Fuzzy Thurston.

The Shorewood Inn opened July 14, but has undergone a nearly $250,000 facelift, including doubling the kitchen size to handle the dining room with a capacity of 180, according to Wood's business partner, Jim Whitcomb.

Whitcomb is a longtime friend of Wood and was owner of the former tavern My Brothers Place, 1258 Main St., a '60s hangout for Lombardi-era Packers players and a precursor of the sports bar. Whitcomb, his wife, Barbara, and son, Chris, are involved in the venture, and another well-known local athlete from the 1960s and 70s, semipro hockey player and coach Gordie Yewman, may soon join the partnership, Whitcomb said.

Wood — who operates a construction business in his hometown Washington, D.C. — says his part in the Shorewood Inn is much more than just a name on a billboard. He plans to be at the restaurant Thursday to Tuesday around Packers home game weekends.

Wood said patrons are "usually going to run into me. I'll either meet them at the door, in the barroom or I'll check at the table to make sure their food is as excellent as it should be."

Because fans will expect the excitement of meeting a Packers legend when they visit the restaurant, another former player will appear on game weekends when Wood isn't available, Whitcomb said. Adderley will fill in for Wood the weekend of Oct. 25.

The idea of linking former Packers to local businesses during the team's current resurgence has obvious merit, but Wood says there's more of a story behind the steak and seafood restaurant.

Whitcomb and Wood met at My Brother's Place while Wood was a player (1960-71) and have been business partners in the past. They once owned a beverage distributorship and are considering buying a golf course.

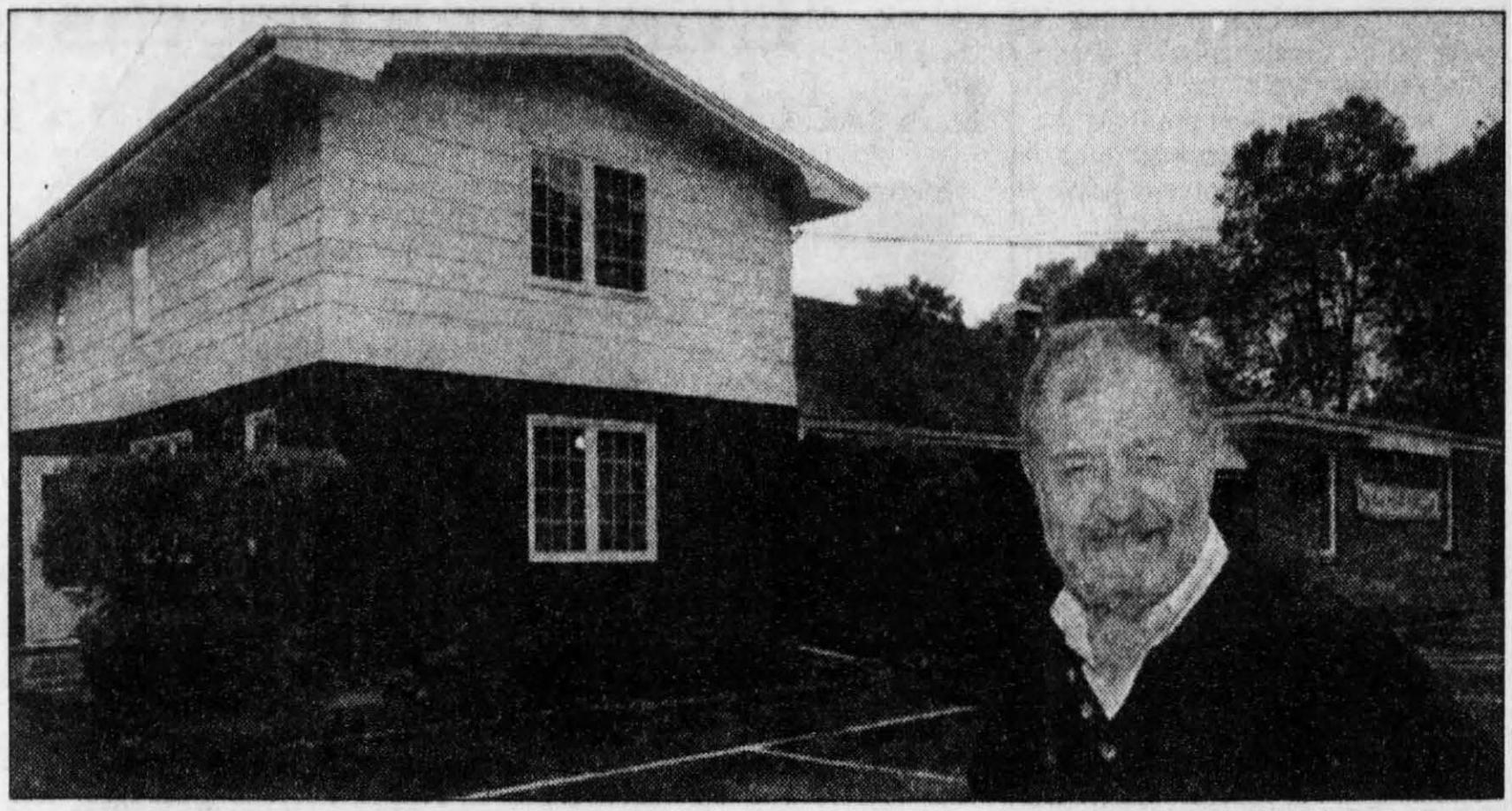
When Wood played in Green Bay, one of his West side neighbors was Inez Berndt, owner of the Carlton. The restaurant is a culinary landmark and was a popular supper club for Packers players for more than 30 years. When the restaurant became available earlier this year, the old buddies jumped at the opportunity, Wood said.

The building is more than 100 years old and has a colorful history, including stints as a brothel and a moonshiner's stop, Whitcomb said. And the reputations of the Carlton and Wood give the place competitive advantages.

"It would be silly not to acknowledge that Willie's name would draw some people," Whitcomb said. "We looked at the property, loved what we saw and see a great future."

Wood's goal is to serve food to match the Carlton's reputation and provide a comfortable local place for visiting Packers alumni.

"I would like to think that the guys have a place they can call home," he said.



Ken Wesely/Press-Gazette
Jim Whitcomb, business partner and long-time friend of Willie Wood, stands in front of Willie Wood's Shorewood Inn, formerly the Carlton Inn.

Willie Wood's Shorewood Inn

Where: 2607 Nicolet Drive
Serving dinner: 4-9 p.m. weekdays, 4-10 p.m. weekends. Open Tuesday through Sunday, adding Mondays Oct. 12.
Packers sightings: This is alumni weekend for the Packers and many former players are expected to visit Wood's restaurant.